

Toward a Nation-Building Operating Concept
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Abstract

Toward a Nation-Building Operating Concept by Colonel John DeJarnette, United States Army, 45 pages.

This monograph explores political science theory and contemporary practice to develop a structural framework for nation-building. The generalized framework is predicated on the observation that interagency operations can achieve a degree of self-synchronization by implementing a high-level operating concept. Self-synchronization achieves unity of action and obviates the need for cumbersome interagency coordinating bodies in all but the highest risk activities. In the context of nation-building, an operating concept is defined as “a mid-to long-term directive that outlines objectives, principles, and guidelines for achieving synergy among the operations of U.S. agencies that do not share a common corporate leadership structure or chain of command.”

There are seven thematic attributes of a nation-building operating concept: persistent effort over time, the requirement for normative decisions during intervention, bottom-up development of representative and accountable institutions, transparency, incremental adaptation, and limited scope of indigenous government powers. These are derived from political science and economic theory, as well as observations of contemporary nation-building operations. These nation-building themes can help to resolve the disequilibrium in institutional power that characterizes most nation-building operations.

The principles of an enterprise approach can be successful in nation-building. However, the practitioner is cautioned against one-size-fits-all approaches. Iteration and adjustment are critical throughout the protracted nation-building process. This monograph provides a number of tools to support development of a context-specific operating concept for nation-building: a taxonomy of state strength for assessing structural weaknesses, a set of conflict regulating behaviors that facilitate settlements, a framework for DDR activities, recommendations for balancing compulsory power of the state with the power of voluntary citizen association, techniques for reducing corruption, an institutional approach to security force assistance, and illustrative metrics for institution building

This monograph concludes that nation-building is a long-term endeavor. Success derives from broad support for political and economic development efforts. Progress is attained through self-synchronization of autonomous government and private sector agencies, rather than ad hoc bureaucratic control mechanisms.

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INTRODUCTION

The United States has a long history of conducting nation-building activities. The principle aim of nation-building is to strengthen the political, economic, and security institutions of a foreign nation, as a means of furthering U.S. foreign policy objectives. The U.S. military has frequently provided a significant proportion of the manpower used to conduct these activities in conflict-prone and post-conflict states, yet it has frequently done so in an *ad hoc* manner without the benefit of clear policy guidance or explicit doctrine to inform campaign design and execution. The lack of a well-understood theory and an authoritative framework to ensure coherent efforts across U.S. agencies has yielded mixed results, with the notable exceptions of post-World War II nation-building in Germany and Japan. Despite the known inadequacies of *ad hoc* approaches, nation-building in Iraq and Afghanistan relied heavily on improvisation to fill the theoretical and practical voids.

The crucible of Iraq and Afghanistan has begun to change the U.S. government approach to nation-building. The Department of Defense (DoD) established relevant policy guidance that established stability operations as a core military mission and directed its components to develop capabilities to lead or support interagency and multi-national stabilization and reconstruction missions.¹ The State Department established a limited civilian capacity to provide expertise to DoD reconstruction teams operating in combat zones. These steps, along with the legislation authorizing a Civilian Response Corps as part of the State Department's Office of the Coordinator for Stabilization and Reconstruction are necessary steps toward a rational approach to nation-building.² Yet these steps are only a beginning. A

¹ Department of Defense (DoD) Directive 3000.05 *Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations* established SSTR as a core military mission during the period of increasing violence in Iraq. However, neither this directive nor the U.S. Joint Forces Command *Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Joint Operating Concept* moved beyond short-term problems in Iraq and Afghanistan to provide a foundational theory to inform joint forces. Subsequent work on the Irregular Warfare Joint Operating Concept and DoD Directive 3000.07 *Irregular Warfare* has not filled this theoretical gap. This paper is an effort to inform future iterations with a structural framework for nation-building.

² S/CRS was established as an exploratory staff element of the U.S. State Department as part of the NSPD-44 process to establish interagency capability for stabilization and reconstruction operations. It had little deployable civilian advisory capacity through 2008. Congress formally authorized S/CRS in the 2009 National Defense

structural approach to nation-building benefits from a coherent operating concept: a mid-to long-term directive that outlines objectives, principles, and guidelines for achieving synergy among the operations of U.S. agencies that do not share a common corporate leadership structure or chain of command.

This paper proposes a set of nation-building principles and an operating concept framework. First, the elements of a strategic operating concept are distilled from NSC-68. A review of foundational political science theory adds a number of nation-building principles and attributes to flesh out the proposed framework. Finally, lessons from conflict regulation illustrate the challenges of practical nation-building efforts. These three dimensions are then combined into a theoretical foundation and set of recommendations to inform development of a nation-building operating concept.

A MODEL FOR AN OPERATING CONCEPT

Of what use is an operating concept to political decision-makers or working-level practitioners? Some might argue that an operating concept is unnecessary because strategy establishes the objectives, and individual agency plans and activities determine appropriate “ways and means” for achieving strategic ends.³ This “ends, ways, means” approach to strategy is a valid methodology to guide activities that are within a single administration’s span of control. The argument in favor of employing a distinct operating concept to pursue strategic aims hinges on understanding the implications of “a single administration’s span of control,” and how this limits consistent policy choices and implementing actions over time.⁴ “A single administration’s span of control” is limited by its term of office, its scope of

Authorization Act. See Title XVI, “Reconstruction and Stabilization Civilian Management Act of 2008” in Public Law 110-114, October 14, 2008.

³ Approved definitions in Joint Publication 1-02 are unhelpful in disaggregating responsibility for multi-agency activities. Joint Force doctrinal definitions of strategy, planning, and operational concepts are predicated on an assumption of clear chain of command and military predominance in most situations. The idea of operating concept presented in this paper accounts for involvement of civilian agencies and multinational partners that do not subscribe to U.S. military planning and execution methodologies. For details on military strategy, plans, and doctrine see For a discussion of levels of war and military planning, see Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 3-0: Joint Operation* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2008), 15-23, and Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 1-02 DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001).

⁴ It is helpful to distinguish an operating concept from a strategy or a plan. Strategy, at the national level, provides the objectives for an activity in political-military terms. The “ends, ways, and means” elements of strategy

activity – or charter, and its bureaucratic structure – or hierarchy. Span of control influences policy consistency in three ways. First, the term of office is generally fixed. Changing an administrator can change policy choices unless authoritative directives set enduring priorities. Similarly, the bureaucratic structure and scope of activity of an agency evolves to meet priorities of every administration. Finally, the relative autonomy of agencies makes it exceptionally difficult to synchronize interagency activities within an administration. This autonomy and lack of a common corporate hierarchy contributes to the difficulty of sustaining unity of purpose over time. In cases where there is no existential threat to the organization, turbulence associated with these adjustments is at worst problematic. When existential threats exist, turbulence can be catastrophic, particularly when the threat spans multiple administrations. The presence of a credible and enduring existential threat is precisely when an authoritative operating concept is needed to sustain interagency unity of purpose and coherent policy spanning several administrations. NSC-68 is instructive example of an effective strategic operating concept.⁵

The macro Cold War operating concept of the United States government is the 1950 seminal policy document *NSC-68: United States Objectives and Programs for National Security* and its predecessors, George Kennan's "Long Telegram," and his subsequent 1947 *Foreign Affairs* article entitled "The Sources of Soviet Conduct."⁶ Expansion of Soviet-backed communist governments,

do provide sufficient detail to synchronize interagency implementation. Those details are left to be worked out in the planning activities of the principle action agent, or supported agency. Plans develop detailed instructions for the employment and sustainment of agencies or forces to achieve specific objectives in a relatively short period of time and within a defined area of operations. Plans are generally developed and implemented through an integrated chain of command or corporate governance body. An operating concept is different in scope and scale. An operating concept provides an intellectual bridge between the strategic aims and the detailed sequence of activities found in agency plans.

⁵ S. Nelson Drew, ed. *NSC-68: Forging the Strategy of Containment* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1996), 34-97. This volume contains full text of NSC-68, along with text of, and commentary on the development and impacts of, related national security documents of the period including NSC 20/4, which outlined the Soviet threat, and NSC-68/1 through NSC-68/4, which addressed the impacts of the Korean War on the U.S. containment policy.

⁶ X, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," *Foreign Affairs* (July 1947). Electronic text available from <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/23331/x/the-sources-of-soviet-conduct> [Accessed 25 Sep 2009]. This article stems from George Kennan's 1946 "Long Telegram" responding to a Washington query regarding the intentions the Soviet Union. Kennan, then serving as a Foreign Service officer in Moscow, provided the strategic context upon which the NSC-68 operating concept was built. See also Giles Harlow and George Maertz, *Measures Short of War:*

coupled with the 1949 detonation of a Soviet atomic weapon presented an existential threat to the United States and its European allies. As a result, NSC-68 emerged as the strategic operating concept to coordinate interagency action to contain Soviet aggression and preserve U.S. interests. NSC-68's enduring policy value lies in the clear articulation of the nature of the Soviet threat juxtaposed against U.S. values and interests, and authoritative principles to shape domestic and international actions to contain the Soviet Union and preserve the Western political and economic system. Though NSC-68 was not the sole expression of U.S. Cold War policy, it was effective in sustaining unity of purpose and self-synchronization across U.S. government agencies.⁷

NSC-68 illustrates four important points about the use of an operating concept to add consistency to long-range policy. First, NSC-68 did not spring from whole cloth. It emerged from National Security Council deliberations over the existential nature of the Soviet threat to the Western political-economic system.⁸ Second, NSC-68 concepts were derived from focused analysis of the geopolitical situation relative to the Soviet Union, the probability of conflict, and the consequences of military confrontation.⁹ It provided a clear assessment of the strength, weaknesses, capabilities, and intentions of the Soviet Union, and options for preserving U.S. interests in the face of that threat.¹⁰ Third, both the threat and the principles of the operating concept were authoritatively communicated by the executive branch

The George F. Kennan Lectures at the National War College 1946-1947 (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1991)

⁷ Self-synchronization is the ability of independent organizations to coordinate action in time, space, or purpose without a common corporate leadership structure or chain of command.

⁸ The title of NSC-68 clearly articulates the document's purpose. The full text references existing strategic aims from NSC-20/4 and other documents. It proposes no new strategic aims, nor does it direct resource allocations and implementing tasks that would be found in implementing plans. It outlines the threat, risks, and alternative courses of action and assesses relative merit, and concludes with recommendations. Notably, the document provides sufficient specificity to guide implementing actions of the relevant U.S. Federal Agencies, and shape the legislative agenda to generate funding appropriations and necessary agency authority to implement the recommendations.

⁹ The scope of NSC-68 was deliberately limited in the President's instruction and NSC-68's terms of reference, which directed an assessment of the sufficiency of the previous programs to combat communist expansion in light Soviet nuclear weapons, and to provide recommendations for coherently dealing with the threat over time.

¹⁰ National Security Council, "NSC-68 United States Objectives and Programs for National Security: A report to the President pursuant to the President's Directive of January 30, 1951," <http://www.airforce-magazine.com/MagazineArchive/Documents/2004/December%202004/1204keeperfull.pdf> [Accessed on September 25, 2009].

throughout the government, and equally important, to the American people. Finally, NSC-68's principles were applicable across a range of resources, priorities, and risks that evolved as the Soviet Union and the U.S. adjusted their tactics.¹¹

The distinguishing features of an operating concept derive from its scope, which is more limited than strategy, its scale, which goes beyond traditional bureaucratic hierarchies that govern planning and execution, and its time span, which likely exceeds the tenure of any single agency administrator. It must enable both military and civilian agencies to achieve unity of purpose across diverse and autonomous lines of action in the absence of a common chain of command or *ad hoc* governance body. A working definition of an operating concept that meets these criteria is: a mid-to long-term directive that outlines objectives, principles, and guidelines for achieving synergy among U.S. agencies that do not share a common corporate leadership structure or chain of command.

The key elements of an operating concept are: a clear problem frame or a description of the geopolitical context and boundaries of action; description of the relevant actors in terms of their fundamental purpose; strategic aims, strengths, weaknesses, intentions, risk tolerance, and propensity or preferences for courses of action; an assessment of the various courses of action in terms of relative resource costs, opportunity cost, and relative risks; and recommendations for operating principles and essential actions for pursuing the strategic aims. It may include insights into generalized assessment metrics that confirm or deny the validity of the operating concept, but it should not provide detailed implementation instructions for specific agencies. Properly prepared, an operating concept achieves synergy among distributed independent actors in time, space, and purpose. It bounds and focuses initiative to achieve strategic aims across multiple administrations within or across governments. Of necessity, the boundaries set in an operating concept are authoritative, yet the implementing methods remain adaptable to

¹¹ See Paul Nitze commentary in S. Nelson Drew, ed. *NSC-68: Forging the Strategy of Containment*. Nitze makes clear that NSC-68 evolved through deliberations within the U.S. government and with principle international powers. Bounding the problem of Soviet expansion, without generalizing it to other communist governments provided the necessary geopolitical precision to develop and adapt implementing plans as conditions evolved.

unforeseen challenge or opportunity. NSC-68 serves as a useful example of an operating concept because it achieved these effects in its relatively narrow focus on the containment policy and comprehensive program recommendations applied across U.S. government agencies. It wisely avoided a “laundry list” of agency-specific actions that might have distracted from collaborative implementation.¹²

Developing an operating concept proceeds from a structured inquiry into the nature of competing systems of support and systems of opposition.¹³ The system of support includes United States agencies and operating partners with shared or similar objectives. The system of opposition includes the principle adversaries and their operating partners with objectives in conflict or competition with those of the United States.¹⁴ This systems approach begins with consideration of the actors and interests described above. It is then bounded by description of the geo-political context, with particular emphasis on historical behavior patterns and strategic culture.¹⁵ Parallel game-based analysis of courses of action for both the system of support and system of opposition should consider the following questions as a way of

¹² Contemporary National Security Council documents, such as National Security Presidential Directive (NSPD)-44 do not provide the same comprehensive operating guidelines and framework that is found in NSC-68. NSPD-44 and similar documents related to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan tend toward detailed articulation of specific agency requirements. While well intentioned, more specificity can lead to bureaucratic delays based on legalistic parsing of responsibility.

¹³ The systems of support and opposition terminology used here drawn from the problem framing process described in emerging Army operational design doctrine, as express in FMI 5-2. The systems-centered Design process and lexicon outlined in that manual may be useful in framing problems and developing operating concepts. However, the actor-centric Design process outlined in FM 5-0 (Final Draft) de-emphasizes the importance of macro group interactions. It encourages a set of binary tensions and propensities among actors. As a result, the actor-centric approach is considerably less helpful in understanding systemic conflict group behavior. See bibliography for citations.

¹⁴ There may be a third system of non-aligned actors that can serve in either support or opposition, depending on the course of action pursued by the U.S. or its adversary.

¹⁵ Clausewitz’s dialectical approach to understanding the nature of war, particularly his development of war as a duel writ large, is informative in the structure of an operating concept. Opposing and supporting systems compete within a theater, bounded by constraints imposed by the interactions of the two systems. The nature of the dynamic interaction influences future actions, all of which must be comprehended in an operating concept. Similarly, draft Army doctrine on design identifies the competing system theory as a basis of framing problems. Unfortunately, the proposed Army doctrine inappropriately attempts to merge design – a useful tool in developing and adapting operating concepts – into the traditional military planning methodology. See Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), Chapter 1, and Department of the Army, *Field Manual-Interim 5-2: Design (Draft)* (Washington, D.C.: U.S Government Printing Office, 2009), Chapter 3.

developing thorough description of the systems and develop sufficient supporting assessments and recommendations needed to complete the operating concept:

- Context. What are the historical and cultural factors at work? What predispositions and preferences result from these factors? What political and legal factors influence the range of options? How do the actors define their identity? What are the principle tensions and seams in the operating system? What is the nature of conflict or friction?
- Outcomes. What are the desired outcomes, in terms of time, space, and purpose? How are they prioritized in relation to one another?
- Resources. What resources can be used over time? What are the constraints on those resources in time, space, and purpose? How fungible are resources over time? How can resource availability be expanded or contracted over time, i.e., what are the secondary and tertiary considerations for resource allocation decisions?
- Logic and Adaptation. What internal logic underpins the motives and actions of the key actors? Who are the adversaries and what is the fundamental nature of the conflict between them? How might that logic influence adaptive options over time? How does implementation sequence make a difference?
- Courses of action. What are the alternative options that the actors might adopt? What initial conditions are desirable for implementing a course of action or changing to another? Based on the outcomes and constraints presented in the context and logic, what unacceptable outcomes would require a fundamental strategy change?
- Capabilities. What capabilities are required to pursue or achieve the desired outcomes? What capability shortfalls exist or may emerge over time?
- Risk. How do the actors define risk and resiliency? What actions might be employed to mitigate risk? What unintended consequences might emerge from the various courses of action?

The form of an operating concept is relevant only in that it authoritatively and unambiguously addresses the questions noted above. A National Security Council directive can be an effective

instrument for conveying the operating concept to all relevant agencies, though lower-level agency initiatives such as State Department Mission Strategic Plans or Military Combatant Command theater strategy documents can also provide the intellectual basis for an approved operating concept. The origin and author of the operating concept are less important than unambiguous senior leader endorsement. This endorsement ensures that the concept is authoritative and implemented by all of the relevant policy makers.¹⁶

The foregoing analysis of NSC-68 illustrates how an operating concept can serve as a useful instrument to achieve self-synchronizing, consistent, mid-to-long term actions across autonomous government agencies. An operating concept fills the void between strategy and plans by providing authoritative and unambiguous policy guidance that enables planning. More critically, it provides a concrete understanding of the competitive environment and compelling narrative that explains how the policies are intended to achieve transformative effects. Nation-building, like deterrence, can benefit from a mid-to long-term directive that outlines objectives, principles, and guidelines for achieving synergy among the operations of U.S. agencies that do not share a common corporate leadership structure or chain of command. The first step toward an operating concept for nation-building is understanding the underlying theory and fundamentals that can create enduring stability.¹⁷

¹⁶ The U.S. military has produced a number of illustrative Joint Operating Concepts describing how future joint commanders might fight specific campaigns. These concepts are not authoritative and generally lack sufficient detail to do more than guide experimentation and exercises to support the capabilities development process. They are insufficient to serve as a template for an executable multi-agency operating concept. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction 3010.02 governs the Joint Operating Concept Development Process. According to this instruction, the substantive elements of a JOC are scope, military problem, solution, risks, mitigation, and implications. The actual content of the current JOCs varies somewhat from this format. CJCSI 3010.02 and the unclassified Joint Operating Concepts (Capstone Concept for Joint Operations, Deterrence Operations, Irregular Warfare, Major Combat Operations, Military Contributions to Cooperative Security, Homeland Defense and Civil Support, and Military Support to Stabilization, Security, Transition and Reconstruction Operations) are available from the Defense Technical Information Center, <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic>.

¹⁷ Throughout this paper, stability refers to the non-disruptive development of political systems. The concept of stability as non-disruptive development emerged from informal discussion with Dr. Rollie Lal at the RAND Corporation.

NATION-BUILDING THEORY AND FUNDAMENTALS

The major struggles in many societies, especially those with fairly new states, are struggles over who has the right and ability to make the countless rules that guide people's social behavior.

–Joel S. Migdal, *Strong States, Weak States*

Political order depends in part on the relation between the development of political institutions and the mobilization of new social forces into politics.

–Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*

Nation-building episodes feature largely in the history of the United States. Expansionist efforts in the Caribbean and Pacific regions in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as well as post-World War II reconstruction efforts serve to illustrate the range of nation-building activities that have supported U.S. foreign policy aims.¹⁸ Whether driven by religious impulse, commercial interest, or a sense of manifest destiny, efforts to export American-style representative government and market economics are apparent in U.S. history. From the late 1860's the United States has used military, political, and economic power to change the governance institutions of other nations. These efforts are rarely successful. According to a Carnegie Endowment study, the United States has engaged in at least 16 significant nation-building efforts since 1900. Of these, only four nations had a democratic form of government 10 years after the U.S. intervention and none of the nations where the U.S. established a surrogate administration had established an indigenous democratic form of government.¹⁹ The Philippine Insurrection stands as a relatively successful case in which U.S. intervention resulted in a viable representative government. Coordinated action by the U.S. military and the State Department significantly contributed to success in

¹⁸ Pre-1861 military expeditions fall into two primary categories: punitive expeditions and demonstration, such as those in the Caribbean and Mediterranean; or territorial conquest, such as early westward continental expansion and the Mexican-American war. This author views naval efforts to open Japan to trade as the beginning of U.S. nation-building activities, though the means and goals of nation-building have changed along with American strength and influence. For a different view, see Jayne A. Carson, *Nation-building: The American Way* (Carlisle, United States Army War College, 2003). Carson argues that nation-building policy began in the late 1890s and was driven predominantly by altruistic impulses.

¹⁹ Major interventions meet three criteria: regime change or survivability was the objective of the intervention, deployment of large numbers of U.S. ground troops, and the use of American military and civilian

the Philippines.²⁰ More frequently, the outcome of U.S. nation-building mirrors the Haiti experience, where piecemeal intervention failed to stabilize the country. Neither the long U.S interventions in Haiti from 1902 to 1934 nor the episodic interventions following World War II successfully created self-sustaining political, economic, and security institutions capable of preventing indigenous unrest. Haphazard and unbalanced integration of civilian and military actions during these interventions failed to remedy serious flaws in the Haitian political and economic system.²¹ One can reasonably conclude that failed nation-building efforts are linked to past practice of treating nation-building as a lesser contingency rather than an explicit set of related foreign policy and security problems that merit synchronized, persistent interagency operations. In short, the lack of a coherent operating concept is a significant factor in unsuccessful nation-building enterprises.²²

Francis Fukuyama concisely points out that the essence of effective nation-building lies in addressing dysfunctional indigenous institutions. To proceed toward an operating concept, a working definition of nation-building in the context of stabilizing conflict-prone or post-conflict states is necessary. His analysis provides a concise definition of nation-building:

political administrators. See Minxin Pei and Sara Kasper, *Lessons from the Past: The American Record on Nation Building*. (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003), 1-4.

²⁰ Brian McAllister Linn's comprehensive work *The Philippine War* and Robert D. Ramsey's concise Occasional Paper *Savage Wars of Peace* provide useful insights into the value of a comprehensive nation-building approach tailored to appropriate context. See: Brian Linn, *The Philippine War: 1899-1902* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000), and Robert Ramsey, *Savage Wars of Peace: Case Studies of Pacification in the Philippines, 1900-1902* (Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2007).

²¹ Haiti is emblematic of U.S. intervention in the internal affairs of Caribbean states, and the Western Hemisphere generally. Repeated intervention in Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Cuba illustrates the potential for negative outcomes of poorly conceived or poorly executed interventions. For Haiti, see Walter Kretchik, et al, *Invasion, Intervention, Intervasion: A concise History of the U.S. Army in Operation Uphold Democracy* (Fort Leavenworth: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Press, 1998).

²² Policy advisors and academics disagree about which approach to nation-building is likely to succeed. For example, Pei and Kasper take a realist approach to conclude that success depends on "the target nation's internal characteristics, a convergence of geopolitical interests of the outside power and the target nation, and a commitment to economic development in the target nation." Jim Dobbins, former U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan, notes the importance of local political dynamics with neighboring countries but favors a strong U.S. intervention that requires an interim surrogate regime. Richard Caplan, veteran of United Nations intervention in Timor, argues that an interim protectorate is useful only if implemented by a multi-national coalition. However, the preponderance of practical lessons learned from contemporary nation-building operations point toward creating indigenous institutions as the critical path to stabilizing conflict-prone societies. See bibliography for citations.

Nation-building is the efforts of an external party or parties to simultaneously modify political and economic institutions of the client nation. The political component may involve reconstruction, adaptation, or re-legitimization of existing or former political institutions consistent with indigenous values and mores. The economic component consists of combinations of reconstruction and development. In the context of nation-building, reconstruction is limited to restoring the political and economic institutions to pre-conflict conditions, while development implies some degree of social and economic growth intended to transform the society into something other than what historically existed.²³

This definition helps to distinguish nation-building from transitory intervention such as peace enforcement or humanitarian assistance. Fukuyama's description of nation-building implies a long-term, persistent effort to effect fundamental change in divided societies. The outcome is enduring stability based on an altered relationship between citizens and the state and changes in the institutions that express that relationship.

A CONCEPTION OF THE STATE

An effective nation-building operating concept begins with a complete understanding of the nature and function of a state. From this basis, the nation-building operating concept can diagnose and seek remedy to significant state dysfunction. Political theorist Ernest Barker describes the state as two interdependent, yet distinguishable, systems that interact to regulate citizens based on geopolitical history and collective tradition. The first element is informal society, purposeful voluntary organizations created to preserve group interests and values. The second is the formal state, which grew from and depends on, the cultural norms of informal society. The state is distinctive in its compulsory authority that exists to maintain legal order in a territory. The state performs its legal function to compel and coerce citizen to assure justice and promote social good according to predominant values.²⁴ Yet, society is not homogenous. It contains a plurality of views and interests, some of which are in conflict. It is here, at the points of discontinuity between factions, that the role of the state becomes confounded. Justice according

²³ See Francis Fukuyama, ed. *Nationbuilding: Beyond Afghanistan and Iraq*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 3-8. Fukuyama provides a concise idea of nation-building for conflict-prone and post-conflict societies that are consistent with political and economic theories addressed later in this paper.

²⁴ Ernest Barker, *Principles of Social and Political Theory*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), 3-4, 42-48, and 60-63.

to the law, which codifies predominant values, might be profound injustice toward significant segments of society. The desires and aspirations of disenfranchised, but otherwise law abiding, factions are repressed by the compelling authority of the legal state.²⁵ This imbalance between citizen obligations to the state and citizenship rights can lead to violent competition for sovereignty if political institutions are insufficient to provide redress.²⁶

Barker's binary conception of the state as a blend of purposeful voluntary association coupled with purposeful compulsory organization points out that good governance is more than adherence to the rule of law. Good governance requires dynamic adaptation of law and policy through political institutions that continually align the interests of the legal state with those of society. Effective political institutions promote stability by furthering the general social good and enforcing the rights of persons.²⁷ By extension, failure to promote the general social good and enforce the rights of persons is destabilizing. While this observation about the relationship between the state and its citizens stands to casual inspection, it is insufficient to describe the dynamics of governance in nation-building. The nation-building governance process can be constructively described in terms of the propensities of the state, political institutions, social mobilization, and the distribution of economic resources.

COMPULSORY ASSOCIATION: PROPENSITIES OF THE STATE

The first element of the governance process is the function of the legal state. Eric Nordlinger argues that the state as an institution is "made up of, and limited to, those individuals who are endowed

²⁵ The paradox of sovereignty lies in the changing social compact between voluntary society and the legal state. At inception of a state, society voluntarily grants coercive authority to political elites for the express purpose of preserving territory, and protecting the rights and safety of the citizenry. This authority is granted in law. Over time, elites use their compelling authority to make and enforce new laws that alter the social contract by changing the distribution of opportunity and obligations to the state. To maintain order, the state sanctions non-compliant factions rather than adjusting the law to restore balance between citizen's obligations to the state and their claims against the state.

²⁶ Barker, *Principles of Social and Political Theory*, 210-215. See also, Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, 1-3. Huntington and his contemporaries provide a sound theoretical foundation for nation-building that is based on western political theory and validated in the post-colonial development of Africa. Their work is more comprehensive than recent work that focuses on transitional administration of occupation. These theories and approaches may not apply to societies with little tradition of central government authority.

²⁷ Barker, *Principles of Social and Political Theory*, 227.

with societywide [*sic*] decision-making powers.”²⁸ Nordlinger’s point, consistent with Barker’s logic, is that law, the constitutional form of government organs, and domestic social structure do not completely explain the actions of governments. Nor do they provide insight into any structural flaws that may contribute to instability.²⁹ Nordlinger argues that equities of political elites are a significant deterministic factor in government actions.³⁰ The legal state is more than a mechanistic bureaucracy programmed by the legal framework of government. It is an animated and autonomous body that pursues its own interests, as defined by the individuals that hold positions of power.³¹ In theory, the interests of the state are declaring and enforcing the law impartially. In practice, the interests of the state are the aggregation of the common interests of those individuals holding the levers of power. These interests include maintaining political order, securing its territory and population, as well as ensuring that individuals retain their offices and the attendant prerogatives of power.³² Nordlinger’s state-as-individual construct is useful in diagnosing sources of state dysfunction.

Nordlinger’s taxonomy of state strength uses two primary variables: state autonomy and support for the state.³³ Support for the state falls in the general range of non-violent acquiescence and peaceful

²⁸ Eric A. Nordlinger, “Taking the State Seriously,” in *Understanding Political Development*, ed. Myron Weiner and Samuel P. Huntington (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1987), 362.

²⁹ It is crucial to bear in mind that nation-building only becomes necessary when the internal political order of the country in question has ceased to function effectively. In these cases, the state exhibits fundamental flaws that prevent it from meeting its obligations to the citizenry, and this consequently produces internal instability that may be aggravated by external conditions. This idea of fundamental structural flaws flows from late 2006 discussions with faculty of the Georgetown Security Studies Program. The topic arose in the context of refining Department of Defense understanding of appropriate stabilization approaches for Iraq. The structural flaw concept is in stark contrast to W.W. Rostow’s equilibrium theory. Rostow, in applying economic theory to political development, concluded that instability resulted from misallocation of state resources between general welfare and security. However, contrary to Rostow’s theory, the introduction of large amounts – relative to GDP – of security and general economic aid fails to produce increased stability; rather it distorts economic fundamentals in a destabilizing way. For more on Rostow’s approach, see W.W. Rostow, *Politics and the Stages of Growth* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1971), 7-26.

³⁰ Nordlinger, “Taking the State Seriously,” 357.

³¹ Nordlinger’s theory is supported by Theda Skocopol’s work indicating that elites drive policy for their own benefit unless they are constrained by a politically strong and sufficiently affluent middle class. See Theda Skocopol, ed. *Democracy, Revolution, and History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 8-10.

³² Nordlinger, “Taking the State Seriously,” 367.

³³ Nordlinger, “Taking the State Seriously,” 369-372.

protest within legal bounds to violent revolution. Autonomy is the state's ability to take action that diverges from the preference of the population. Regressive taxation and compulsory service are but two examples of autonomous elite action that may raise the ire among segments of the population that view the benefit to be disproportionate to the cost.

	Autonomy of action	Support from citizenry
Strong	High	High
Independent	High	Low
Responsive	Low	High
Weak	Low	Low

Table 1 -- Nordlinger's taxonomy of state strength³⁴

Nordlinger's state-as-individual concept and supporting taxonomy of state power outlined in Table 1 can point to sources of destabilizing state actions. The independent state and the weak state are of particular concern in nation-building because lack of support for the government is an indicator of instability.

An independent state is characterized by high state autonomy and low popular support. This type of government is at risk from domestic disorder or insurrection. High autonomy emerges when governing elites are insulated from the population by non-electoral or non-merit ascent to office, strong patronage systems, or income sources other than taxation.³⁵ Independent states tend toward opaque, authoritarian governance that is unresponsive to society. Because the state elites do not, or cannot, depend on the citizenry for economic and political support, a variety of abuses can lead to instability. Some examples include caste or class discrimination as a means of retaining power, corruption in the form of diverting

³⁴ Derived from Nordlinger, "Taking the State Seriously."

³⁵ These factors are correlated with authoritarian regimes, particularly in countries with abundant exploitable natural resources.

state resources for personal use or extracting bribes from the population, and repressive internal security practices such as praetorian bureaucracies, strong censorship or imprisoning dissidents.³⁶

In a weak state, both support and autonomy are low. The absence of both economic and political strength limits the range of options in preserving political order and territory. In contrast to the independent state, the absence of economic resources prevents a weak state from relying exclusively on authoritarian repression to reliably retain power. In addition, the absence of popular support prevents the weak state from using mass mobilization to retain office. Weak state governance structures are more feudal in nature, distributed among independent local leaders that have sufficient political and economic govern. Diffused power in weak states poses internal and external risks to stability. Internal risk flows from the requirement that the central state authorities accommodate local power brokers or risk ouster by force. Military coup or overthrow from a coalition of local strongmen are both distinct possibilities.³⁷ External threats come from the inability to maintain a strong state security forces to defend against physical attack or subversion fomented by neighboring states. Weak states facing these threats can exhibit the same types of maladaptive responses as independent states, though on a smaller scale and for shorter periods. In addition, state corruption in the form of bribing local power brokers or paralysis of the central government can be pervasive.

The remaining two cases in Table 1, strong states and responsive states, are lesser concerns for nation-building. Strong states do not require extensive nation-building because the state is functioning to the satisfaction of the preponderance of its citizens. Responsive states can be problematic to the extent that the state is excessively malleable and unable to maintain consistent political and economic policies. A will-o-the-wisp government may be quite popular with the citizenry, but unable to take controversial action to preserve sovereignty. Responsive states risk instability associated with populist policies that

³⁶ Migdal, "Strong States, Weak States: Power and Accommodation," 409-415.

³⁷ Migdal, "Strong States, Weak States: Power and Accommodation," 401-403.

may not be sustainable over the long run.³⁸ Maladaptive government decisions are likely to arise from economic factors such as excessive debt and currency instability. Nation-building efforts in responsive states generally focus on administrative capacity building and humanitarian assistance. Large-scale efforts to suppress insurrection are unlikely in these cases.

Though not definitive, the propensities of the state indicate the conflict potential within a state. Nordlinger's taxonomy reveals that demanding nation-building problems are likely to involve weak states or independent states. Both are vulnerable to conflict because of structural flaws and maladaptive behavior. Independent states are at risk from insurrection or violent internal unrest. Weak states are at risk of both internal revolt and external attack. Resolving the structural causes of low support for the regime is likely to require significant effort to reconstruct, adapt, or re-legitimize the regime. The vested interests of office holders are impediments to the cooperation and concessions inherent in fundamental reform.

VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATION: THE MODERATING EFFECTS OF POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

Understanding the propensities of the state, and by extension the logic behind the decisions of the governing elites, provides insights into the legal compulsory component of nation-building. The next critical element is understanding how and why citizens organize to enforce the social contract through political action. The social compact exists to preserve enduring social values. It depends on sustained balance between citizenship obligations and citizenship rights. Citizenship obligations result from the voluntary surrender of specified powers to the state. Common citizenship obligations include responsibilities to pay taxes, submit to compulsory service, and to comply with the provisions of law. These obligations are undertaken in exchange for the right to make claims against the state, such as protection, goods, services, and recourse to a justice process.³⁹ Imbalance between citizenship rights and

³⁸ Responsive states are not immune to discriminating against small minority groups. However, protracted discriminatory policies indicate a need to re-assess the state as an independent or weak state.

³⁹ Skocopol, *Democracy, Revolution, and History*, 56-71.

obligations is a significant factor in destabilizing political activity. Elections are neither necessary nor sufficient to assure stability. Citizens can – and do – convey claims against the state through non-electoral actions including petition, demonstrations, public debate, fundraising, and protests. Without strong institutions, political action is fragmented and focused on narrow objectives without regard to potential conflict with other groups. This occurs because spontaneous political grouping is generally according to economic class or industry, patronage associations, or linguistic groups. Labor unions and communal self-help organizations centered on religious affiliation are classic examples of narrow interest, spontaneous political affiliation.⁴⁰ Elections under these fragmented conditions are destabilizing because of ‘zero-sum’ nature of the competition for power.⁴¹ Strong political institutions serve to buffer against this type of instability.⁴²

Samuel Huntington argues that strong political institutions serve an important role in regulating changes in the social compact.⁴³ They serve as bridge between the citizens and political elites that exercise state power, and thereby help peacefully shape the expectations of both groups. They also aggregate fragmented communal grouping into more powerful organizations. According to Huntington, strong political institutions share four attributes: adaptability, complexity, autonomy, and coherence. Adaptability, the ability to evolve in purpose, is essential to assimilating new social forces and conditions into constructive political participation. Complexity mobilizes political participation and builds consensus within a local constituency, and then aggregates the local constituencies into regional and national level groups. This process integrates a range of interest group issues within a single political party. Autonomous political institutions contain a multiplicity of independent parties. Autonomy provides for the assimilation of new leaders and interest groups into the system without change to

⁴⁰ Phillip H. Pollock, III, “Organizations as agents of Mobilization: How Does Group Activity Affect Political Participation?,” *American Journal of political Science* Volume 26, Number 3 (Aug 1982): 485-493.

⁴¹ Joan M. Nelson, “Political Participation”, in *Understanding Political Development*, ed. Myron Weiner and Samuel P. Huntington (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1987), 104-107.

⁴² Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, 405.

⁴³ Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, 24.

previously established parties. Lastly, coherence is established through consensus on functional boundaries and internal rule sets for the institution.⁴⁴ Collectively, these four attributes – adaptability, complexity, autonomy, and coherence – provide a foundation for defining the public interest and constructive political action. Strong political institutions are indispensable in societies under stress because they moderate the rate and magnitude of change.

Political institutions achieve this moderating effect in two ways. First, they tend to dampen frictions between identity groups through the process of coalition building and compromise. While some identity groups may advocate extreme views about fundamentally normative choices such as land reform, wealth redistribution, or rights of minority groups, the dialogue among political institutions can facilitate incremental change in these normative areas, and thereby provide time for society to absorb and accept the accommodations. Simply put, incremental change through structured institutions provides a brake on radicalism and unrest. The second and less direct moderating effect of political institutions comes from the process of integrating minority groups through political mobilization.⁴⁵ In this case, the political organization provides a safety valve to vent minority frustration through non-violent dialogue and demonstration. These moderating mechanisms work best when the number of political parties is small. As the number of political parties grows, a tendency toward short-duration political alliances or political deadlock contributes to inconsistent government policies and destabilizing social frustration.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, 20-22. Note that Huntington use of autonomy is in a collective context, where Nordlinger uses the same term to in the sense of an individual. With this context in mind, it is clear than an autonomous political institution, like an autonomous office holder, can act with relative impunity from outside agents.

⁴⁵ M. Stephen Weatherford, "Interpersonal Networks and Political Behavior," *American Journal of Political Science* Volume 26, Number 1 (Feb 1982): 131-137.

⁴⁶ Reducing the number of parties tends to focus efforts on more homogenous priority sets and consequently increases the level of political participation and support for the broader parties. Cross cutting exposure to a multiplicity of political parties and weakly differentiated choices contributes to popular ambivalence and disenchantment with the established political system. However, single party systems do not provide these moderating effects. Single party systems tend to approximate oligarchic governance systems, where popular participation in politics does not imply popular control of government. Single party systems can be stable and resilient in homogeneous or repressive societies. See Diana C. Mutz, "The Consequences of Cross-Cutting Networks for Political participation," *American Journal of Political Science*, Volume 46, Number 4 (Oct 2002):

Strong political institutions that score well according to Huntington's attributes of adaptability, complexity, autonomy, and coherence are the ideal mechanism for stabilizing political change. However, these are difficult to create or promote in situations where the population views that their problems stem from unrepresentative institutions. Nordlinger's "state-as-individual" model explains how political party elites may look to their own interests before representing the interests of their constituents. This is most likely to occur in independent or weak states where "conditions of economic scarcity – in which political office provides a ready opportunity for upward mobility – give a 'zero-sum' quality to power struggles. The scope and intensity of elite competition thus tends to be fierce, undermining the possibilities of stable democratic rule."⁴⁷ Wholesale restructuring of the governance system and political organization may be required to remedy this condition.

A nation-building operating concept should accommodate the elements of non-electoral participation outlined above. Strong political intuitions can be created from grass-roots economic and communal affiliations. Local, informal means of communication are more influential than mass media, particularly in societies with lower education and literacy levels.⁴⁸ The operating concept should not press for popular elections too early in the process. Premature elections can unleash violent competition among identity groups. Nation-building must focus first on the societal component of the state, strengthening representative political institutions as the primary vehicle of social change.⁴⁹ This approach contributes to stability through incentives for collaborative, incremental political action.

845-57. Also see Barker, *Principles of Social and Political Theory*, 209-211, and Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, 89-92.

⁴⁷ Atul Kohli, "Democracy and Development" in *Development Strategies Reconsidered*, ed. John P. Lewis and Valeriana Kallab (Oxford: Transaction Books, 1986), 166.

⁴⁸ Phillips Cutright, "National Political Development: Measurement and Analysis," *American Sociological Review* Volume 28, Number 2 (Apr, 1963): 258-260.

⁴⁹ Skocopol, 197-201.

IMPROVING STABILITY: LIMITED GOVERNMENT BALANCED WITH STRONG POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

The fundamental purpose of government is to increase the general welfare of the population, but this is not a natural state of affairs. It is important to highlight again that governance and government are not synonymous. Governance, in the macro sense, results from balanced combinations of voluntary associations regulating behavior and the compulsory power of the state to compel compliance.⁵⁰ As noted above, office holders will seek to increase their political and economic capital unless there are substantive constraints on their ambitions. Similarly, citizens will seek maximum benefit from government, often at the expense of minority social groups.⁵¹ Strong, adaptable institutions provide a necessary check against excesses attributable to both state abuses and the tyranny of the majority. They provide a means to balance the citizen's claims on the state and the compulsory power of government. Yet voluntary political association is effective only when government scope of action is sufficiently limited to assure popular control of government. What then is the proper scope of government generally, and particularly in conflict prone societies? How can nation-building efforts reduce corruption and encourage productive social, political, and economic development? Juxtaposing normative and positive economic theory provides insights to answer these questions.

Barker highlights a fundamental paradox of normative welfare society. The purpose of government is to “declare and enforce law as the means of enforcing the rights of persons.”⁵² Yet, “rights

⁵⁰ Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, 1-3. Huntington argues convincingly that good governance emerges from strong, adaptable, coherent political institutions that allow a degree of popular participation and direction of policy, and social direction in the methods of regulating succession of political power. Voluntary associations shape the policies for the general good, and limit the compelling power of the state to tax and conscript resources in support of public policy.

⁵¹ Barker, *Principles of Social and Political Theory*, 241-245. “Rights of persons” addresses the interdependent extension of political and economic liberty; one cannot change without corresponding in the other. Expanding economic rights, particularly property rights and private control of economic activity, the population will employ its economic influence to obtain greater political influence and power. The government, on the other hand, will seek to retain influence by means of providing increase personal security in the form of social services, physical protection, and administrative control. There is a balance to be struck in the transitions that accompany economic and political change. Sustainable change in economic structures is unlikely without concomitant change in political power distribution, and conversely so.

⁵² Barker, *Principles of Social and Political Theory*, 227.

are not to be had for the asking, or as a matter of pure gift....There is always a sense in which they are bought; and they are only sure when they are fairly bought by an honest bargain.”⁵³ An economic analysis of social efficiency illuminates the nature of this bargain, the costs of unwarranted government intervention, and economic disputes related to citizenship rights. Social efficiency describes the allocation of productive resources so that no other allocation can make anyone better off without making someone worse off.⁵⁴ Economic disputes over citizenship rights are common in every society. Competition among identity groups to change economic arrangements and political power arrangements are at the heart of societal evolution. This competition is productive when market forces drive socially efficient resource allocation. However, government intervention on behalf of a disaffected identity group distorts social efficiency by compelling one group to be worse off by involuntarily surrendering resources. In economic terms, unwarranted government intervention – e.g., for purposes other than territorial defense, protecting the rights of citizens, and regulating the money supply and taxes – results in private efficiency for the beneficiary group and fragmented stability for the larger society. In short, normative redistributive policies are counterproductive and destabilizing in both the short and long-term.⁵⁵

An alternative to normative welfare economics, where government coerces resource redistribution for the benefit of particular interest groups, is the positive approach to economics. The positive approach assumes that individuals – and by extension groups – are aware of their alternatives and preferences for present and future consumption. They invest their time and resources based on those

⁵³ Barker, *Principles of Social and Political Theory*, 246

⁵⁴ Edwin S. Mills, *The Burden of Government* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1986), 5. This is in contrast to private efficiency, which is attained by employing resources to maximize profit.

⁵⁵ Skocopol, “Macro-politics of Micro-economic Disputes” in *Democracy, Revolution, and History*, 210-229. Her study of redistributive social programs address the effects of health care, subsidy payments and generalized preferences. She found that governments used compulsory powers to aggregate resources and create macro-level policies designed to benefit small segments of the population. These were destabilizing unless supported by universally accepted societal values such as mandatory education or access to health care. The principle destabilizing effect is discriminatory policy that violates Mills’ social efficiency principle. Mills observed similar effects in his study of U.S. domestic policy.

preferences and seek to maximize utility accordingly. It is important to distinguish between utility and profit. Utility is the measure of satisfaction without regard to cost or revenue; it is value-based preference choice. For example, a person may choose to work a fixed number of hours for wages. This leaves the remainder of his time to engage in other pursuits, including leisure, whose utility or satisfaction is higher than the benefit of income from additional paid labor. Utility differs from profit by degree. Profit is measured solely as the surplus between cost and revenue; an objective measure of value added. Social efficiency exists when individuals maximize their utility at market rates by allocating resources according to preferences rather than profit potential.⁵⁶ Coercive government redistribution fundamentally distorts capital allocation according to marginal utility preferences. Income inequality cannot be altered through coercive redistribution programs. Transfer payments distort utility assessments regarding the value of marginal work and leisure, or consumption and investment. Government transfer payments to low-income people and high marginal tax rates on high-wage earners discourage work, savings, and earnings in both groups. In addition, government intervention generates waste by absorbing resources that are better used to expand human and physical capital in the private sector. Equally important, government intervention is accompanied by inflationary monetary policies used to reduce the real cost of deficit funded transfer payments.⁵⁷

Limiting government scope of action minimizes the structural distortions noted above. It also encourages social efficiency through market forces. Mills identifies the three essential functions of government, and argues that government action beyond these areas is inefficient and counterproductive:

⁵⁶ Mills, *The Burden of Government*, 1-8.

⁵⁷ Income distribution – and opportunity – depends on the distribution of human capital and physical capital. Human capital is the set of natural abilities, education, skills and experience possessed by an individual. Physical capital is the combined means of production and available natural resources that serve as inputs to production. Both can be changed over time based on preferences of individual economic actors that are aware of their opportunities. Income inequality is a function of inequality in ownership of capital, which influences how access to education and the opportunity to control individual production grow over time. Reducing this inequality depends more on increasing the stock of human capital and its employment at market driven rates than any other economic variable.

1. The government should relate to other sovereign governments in a variety of ways, including protection of its citizens and property from foreign seizure and harassment.
2. Government should define private property rights and provide a legal basis for private economic institutions, instruments of ownership, and exchange of services and property. Government should also establish police and court systems that protect rights of people to their persons, human capital, and material property.
3. Government must provide for and control the money supply and must levy taxes to finance the activities listed here.⁵⁸

This construction of government function is useful for nation-building enterprises. It acknowledges the effectiveness of private interest in maximizing utility. It recognizes the importance of legal frameworks to regulate social interactions, and the importance of government to serve as an enforcement arm against those violating the social contract. It also recognizes the importance of stable monetary and fiscal policies to build confidence among citizens, and encourage investments in human and physical capital that are essential to development. Finally, it recognizes the importance of limiting compulsory government powers to economic and physical security of the state. In nation-building, limited government is preferred because it relies primarily on bottom up approaches to solve local problems, and institutional mechanisms to address regional issues.

There is a flawed populist argument that providing public goods is inherently government business. Public goods are commodities whose consumption by additional people requires no additional resources, and where consumption is non-excludable. Only defense of the territory and policing are true public goods. Adding to the population does not directly increase the cost of security, and defense is an inherent element of sovereignty.⁵⁹ All other common examples, such as streetlights, a clean environment, and maritime navigation can be provided by the private sector and funded through user fees that directly assess cost to users. User fees are more efficient because unlike general revenue taxes, user fees directly assess cost and produce only what the market can consume.⁶⁰ Some have argued that general social

⁵⁸ Mills, *The Burden of Government*, 31.

⁵⁹ Security is a fixed cost or overhead function of sovereignty. Per capita costs may change over time, and the general overhead rate may adjust according to security threats but these factors do not alter the definitional formulation of public goods at fixed points in time.

⁶⁰ Mills, *The Burden of Government*, 31-40. The presence of “free riders” who cannot be forced to pay for service does not meet the criteria of a public good. Similarly, high transaction costs does not justify shifting the

services such as public education, environmental protection, and health services are public goods better provided by the government. However, positive economics dictates that these private markets can appropriately price the services based on costs and marginal utility of the outcomes. Employers require healthy, educated workers, and have an interest in a clean, safe environment. As a result, employers will invest resources to produce these goods based on marginal utility calculations and self-interest.⁶¹

Governments have no unique advantage in providing public goods other than defense and law enforcement. Mills concisely summarizes the rationale for limited government: “Any form of voluntary organization or production that is available to government is available to private parties at the same costs and using the same technology of production, market and other research, and distribution. The one thing that governments can do that private parties cannot do is to coerce people to take part in transactions that make them worse off.”⁶² Bad governments can certainly prevent social efficiency, equity, innovation, effectiveness, and growth. It is doubtful that even the best government intervention can improve these more effectively than private interests.

Sweeping government powers provide opportunity for corruption, particularly under conditions encountered in nation-building.⁶³ Simply stated, corruption is a form of “rent” paid to office holders for the privilege of accessing and employing the office holder’s political capital. There is evidence of corruption in all societies, regardless of the type of political and economic system, though the level of

burden to public funding. These cases illustrate that the value of the services is lower than the cost, thus the activity is not viable because it fails the utility test.

⁶¹ The market principle does not require that locally sourced inputs, though utility considerations may generate preferences for use of local resources at higher costs. Local workers may choose not to participate at the wages offered, but this is a normative rather than economic choice and it likely reflects a distorted understanding of opportunities on the part of workers. For a detailed assessment of the impact of public goods, see Duncan Snidal, “Public goods, Property Rights, and Political Organizations.” *International Studies Quarterly* Volume 23, Number 4 (December 1979): 532-566.

⁶² Mills, *The Burden of Government*, 35.

⁶³ Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, 59-61. Huntington notes that anti-corruption laws serve only to multiply opportunities for corruption. Corruption is best limited by reducing the scope of government powers and strengthening popular control of government through representative political institutions.

corruption varies.⁶⁴ Corruption works on an economic substitution principle where bureaucrats invest in political capital, occasionally buying office outright, rather than other forms of capital. Bureaucrats can extract payments for assistance in navigating compulsory government regulations, permit processes, or complex taxation systems. Without making moral judgments, it is clear that corruption is detrimental to endogenous economic growth because illicit payments and the costs of excessive regulation reduce the capital available for productive pursuits.

The non-linear and regressive effects of corruption are particularly damaging in nation-building. Corruption harms poor countries in the early stages of economic development take-off more than it does developed economic systems. It is most harmful in societies poor in human capital because low-skill workers have few options for productive employment.⁶⁵ Low-skill workers have difficulty increasing their capital through migration or alternative employment. Corruption takes resources that could be used to increase human capital through education or job skill training. Equally harmful is the expansion of government correlated with corruption. Government officials expand the bureaucracy because it yields a relatively higher rate of return through corruption rents than can be attained from private sector pursuits in economies with low human capital levels.⁶⁶ Limiting the role of government is a critical element in reducing the corrosive effects of corruption, and in directing capital for sustainable growth and development.

⁶⁴ Isaac Ehrlich and Francis T. Lui, "Bureaucratic Corruption and Endogenous Economic Growth," *The Journal of Political Economy* Volume 107, Number 6 (December, 1999): 271-273.

⁶⁵ Ehrlich and Lui, "Bureaucratic Corruption and Endogenous Economic Growth," 291-293. Interestingly, a bureaucratic monopoly on corruption, where organized party structures control the level of rents or payments to officials on a per capita basis can lead to higher growth rates than unregulated corruption where bureaucrats compete for increasing power, increasing rents or both. This was the case in Europe comparing former communist countries to OECD states. In OECD states, communist growth rates were higher on a per capita annual basis, despite lower actual income. Corruption payments were predictable based on proxy measures of regulations, permits, and taxation relative to GDP.

⁶⁶ This is particularly true for societies with a history of government corruption. Industry is less attractive for a given risk profile than is government employment because corruption – like inflationary monetary policy – harms industry, but corruption is controlled by profit-maximizing government officials. It is less risky in these cases to buy into a government job and seek returns on political capital than to start a business that generates returns based on human and physical capital.

Government intervention for any purpose beyond Mills' three primary functions – territorial defense, making and enforcing domestic laws to protect the rights of citizens, and regulating the money supply and taxes – can be considered a form of corruption.⁶⁷ The relevant conclusion for nation-building is that the role of government should be strictly constrained, particularly in the areas of economic regulation. This approach constrains opportunity for corruption through rent-seeking diversion of scarce economic capital that can be better used in the private economy and helps to legitimize bureaucrats by preventing opportunities for illicit payments in exchange for preferential treatment.⁶⁸

The objective of nation-building is to create stable political and economic institutions that function according to prevailing social values. Fukuyama's definition of nation-building asserts that successful nation-building depends on balanced adaptation of political and economic systems in a highly polarized society. Attending to one without addressing the other only aggravates conflict. Barker's binary conception of state as a combination of voluntary and compulsory associations underscores the need for both a bottom-up and a top-down approach to adapting or re-legitimizing the political system. External intervention in nation-building must address the structural problems of government institutions, many of which flow from government officials manipulating their office for personal gain. External intervention must also address the structural issues that contribute to fragmented or low support for government systems and policies. Huntington's research reinforces the utility of strong political institutions as a remedy for both areas. Strong political institutions address the bottom-up issues through voluntary participation, aggregating public concerns, moderating extreme political views, and fostering incremental change at rates that can be absorbed by society. Strong institutions address top-down problems by mitigating maladaptive propensities of what Nordlinger categorizes as independent states and weak states, both of which fail to meet obligations to the citizenry. In addition to strong political

⁶⁷ Ehrlich and Lui, "Bureaucratic Corruption and Endogenous Economic Growth," 277.

⁶⁸ This is particularly true during external intervention. Exogenous cash influx is accompanied by a number of unintended economic ills including corrupting bureaucrats for access to government owned facilities, wage and price inflation, and production and demand distortions of local markets to name a few. Intervention must

institutions, a limited scope of government action has a stabilizing effect by reducing corruption and directing capital toward productive pursuits. Mill's identifies three essential functions of government that satisfy the requirements of balanced political and economic development. These elements illuminate the dynamics of general political and economic development. An understanding of conflict and conflict regulation helps complete the framework for a nation-building operating concept.

CONFLICT AND CONFLICT REGULATION IN NATION-BUILDING

Conflict, in the context of nation-building, results from a failure of institutions to function according to societal values. The defining characteristics of this type of conflict are structural failure and power disequilibrium caused by eroded confidence in institutions or leaders, and violent competition for sovereignty. Fear, uncertainty, and opportunism accelerate political violence and protest among conflict groups.⁶⁹ However, these factors do not imply complete anarchy. Social mobilization and organization still exist, and elite leadership is the primary influence in regulating conflict. Successful reconciliation approaches make use of the structural predominance of elites to identify and correcting the economic and social institutional imbalances through combinations of proven conflict regulating mechanisms.

The cause of conflict is difficult to isolate in practice, but context-specific assessment can provide useful indicators. Academic studies have found that differential rates of change – rather than absolute levels – in economic or social status of factions are a primary cause of political instability. The sense of loss in status relative to another group within the same society is the operative element, not sense that other societies enjoy economic or social advantages. The differential change problem is internal to the state.⁷⁰ Rapid change in one dimension without attendant change in the others leads to instability without

be carefully tailored the absorptive capacity of the existing economy. In kind aid, rather than cash payments, is less likely to produce these deleterious effects.

⁶⁹ Guillermo O'Donnell and Phillippe C. Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 25-27.

⁷⁰ Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, 40-44. See also Robert Muggah, "No Magic Bullet: A Critical Perspective on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration in Post-conflict Contexts," *The Round Table* Volume 94, Number 379. Muggah argues that rapid and uneven investment – differential development – fuels insecurity and armed violence.

the moderating effect of strong political institutions. In non-western societies, differential modernization increases conflict intensity, and is correlated with populist rejection of conflict regulation.⁷¹ Conflict regulation and resolution depend on influencing elite conflict group leaders based on an understanding of the methods and motives of social mobilization at the time of intervention.

If imbalance in social and economic status among interest groups is the fuel of conflict, conflict group leaders are the engine of reconciliation. The fragmented masses make little contribution to conflict regulation without elite leadership and organization.⁷² Structurally predominant elites manage conflict and mobilization through voluntary organizations such as parties linked to economic and communal factions, and through networks of patron-client relationships. A successful external intervention to mitigate conflict depends on addressing the motives of the elites and tailoring incentives according to the nature of elite influence. For example, economic incentives for conflict resolution might appeal more to conflict groups based on trade unions. Those same incentives would be less attractive to ethnic minorities seeking societal recognition. Understanding elite motives and mechanisms of influence are indispensable to mitigating violence in nation-building.⁷³

Nordlinger observed that successful conflict termination is a function of “decision-making procedures, political arrangements, and behavior rules which are potentially capable of accommodating antagonistic groups to one another; thereby providing a framework within which severe conflicts are regulated.”⁷⁴ Enduring settlements result from deliberate conciliation among elite conflict group leaders.

⁷¹ Eric A. Nordlinger, *Conflict Regulation in Divided Societies* (Cambridge, Harvard University, 1972), 119. However, the non-elite masses cannot be entirely rejected in developing conflict regulation strategies. They generally act in one of the following three modes: accepting the solutions worked out by leaders, rejecting the solutions worked out by leader, or engaging in widespread violence or escalatory acts in contravention to the direction of conflict group leaders.

⁷² Nordlinger, *Conflict Regulation in Divided Societies*, 40-41, 119.

⁷³ Nordlinger, *Conflict Regulation in Divided Societies*, 40, 80-87. Nordlinger also notes politically quiescent or deferential masses as an operative mechanism for elite conflict management. These conditions are likely to emerge as populations become “war weary” and more amenable to mediation.

⁷⁴ Nordlinger, *Conflict Regulation in Divided Societies*, 20. In Nordlinger’s study, no violent political conflict was successfully managed without one or more of the identified practices. Also see Kreps, “Multilateral Military Interventions: Theory and Practice”.

Conciliation is not spontaneous; it emerges as a product of elites looking to their own interests according to the state-as-individual model described above. Conciliation in conflict-regulation is correlated with four principle environmental conditions. First, is presence of an external threat that overpowers the domestic conflict, such as an external intervention. External intervention may suspend the domestic conflict in one of two ways. The first is the peacekeeping effect by interposing foreign forces between domestic conflict groups. The second option is for conflict groups to cooperate against an unwanted invader, only to resume fighting once the foreign presence is repelled. In addition to external intervention is pressure from a strong commercial class whose commercial interests are harmed by the conflict. Powerful economic interests, such as export companies, can provide significant pressure for negotiated settlement among the conflict groups. The third condition occurs when a group acquires predominant political power. Victory is cemented and stability restored by consolidating power and accommodating minority conflict groups in the short term. This case is likely to see renewed conflict without transparent accommodation processes. Fourth, and finally, attrition-related exhaustion may lead to settlement. The common element of successful conflict regulation is conciliatory elite behavior.⁷⁵ Creating at least one of these conditions enables elites to pursue structured conflict regulating practices.

Nordlinger's empirical study identified six conflict-regulating practices the result in enduring settlement. One or more of these approaches is necessary to stable conflict termination. The first approach is creating a stable governing coalition between parties to pre-empt further conflict. This restores balance based on established political institutions and agreed rules for governing. However, a coalition approach in early nation-building efforts is impeded by zero-sum views of political and economic controls. In nation-building, bottom-up power sharing is helpful in demonstrating the benefits of structured power sharing over zero-sum competition. The second approach to conflict regulation is employing a principle of proportionality. In this approach, resources and power are allocated based on the sized of conflict groups. In nation-building, proportionality is uniquely useful because it tends to

⁷⁵ Nordlinger, *Conflict Regulation in Divided Societies*, 43-72.

reduce the degree and scope of conflict. A third mechanism for regulating conflict is the mutual veto mechanism. Mutual veto contributes to compromise on issues central to the conflict, mitigates fear and anxiety about exploitation, and provides opportunity for leaders to build mutual trust in one another, and trust in the intuitional governance mechanisms. The fourth mechanism, purposeful de-politicization, is a strong complement to both proportionality and mutual veto. Purposeful de-politicization is agreement to limit near-term agendas, avoiding contentious issues or processes to prevent conflict. It is a useful confidence-building tool in nation-building. De-politicization enables the fifth conflict regulating behavior: compromise. Compromise is distinguished by reciprocity and mutual adjustment on contentious issues. Compromise is most successful when the population is prepared to absorb the changes proposed by elite leaders. Finally, concessions between groups are a viable but rarely used conflict regulation mechanism when political tensions and the propensity of violence are high.⁷⁶ In nation-building, these conflict-regulating mechanisms are best used in combinations to support bottom-up efforts to restore confidence in government.

At this point, it is important to note two unsuccessful conflict-regulating approaches that should be avoided in nation-building. Foremost, imposing a highly democratic government is unsuitable without strong political institutions. One-man, one-vote electoral processes neglect all but majority segments of the population.⁷⁷ This encourages partisan distortion of the political process, particularly among minority identity groups, and risks increasing violence. However, a variation on electoral democracy might prove useful if conflict groups – rather than individuals – are empowered with equal votes in establishing governance institutions. This negates the adverse impact on minority groups, albeit at some disadvantage to the majority group. A one-tribe, one-vote approach is at best an interim step toward representative

⁷⁶ Nordlinger, *Conflict Regulation in Divided Societies*, 21-31. Notably, territorial federalism or secession is an outcome rather than a means of conflict regulation. It is a politically charged concession that signals sovereign defeat and may lead to further instability.

⁷⁷ Marek M. Kaminski, Monika Nalepa, and Barry O'Neill, "Normative and Strategic Aspects of Transitional Justice," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* Volume 50, Number 3 (June 2006): 296-300. Democratic processes are often in conflict with the need for stability in conflict states. This is mitigated in states with long

electoral government, and is highly dependent on strong voluntary political organization to limit or forestall widespread violence. The second unsuccessful conflict regulating practice is appealing to national identity. In nation-building, societies tend to be divided along identity group lines such as ethnicity, religion, economic strata, or linguistic group. Breaking down these segmental loyalties and reforming a meta-national identity is both unlikely and highly destabilizing during conflicts. Efforts to define a national identity in the midst of political instability is likely to intensify conflict as the competition to define identity fosters a struggle over which identity group or value set will dominate.⁷⁸ Nation-building efforts should avoid these approaches in favor of the six effective conflict-regulating mechanisms noted above.

No discussion of conflict regulation in nation-building settings is complete without addressing disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of combatants. DDR is conceptually straightforward: create a political agreement on conflict regulation, demobilize and reintegrate honorable former fighters, and bring war criminals to justice. In practice, it is a highly normative, emotionally charged process that depends on strong, transparent institutions. The sequence of actions is critical to successful outcomes. An agreed framework for political settlement provides the foundation, followed by concurrent efforts to demobilized and reintegrate fighters, followed by generalized disarmament, and concluded with social accountability processes. There are no short cuts to enduring reconciliation in post-conflict nation-building.⁷⁹

experience of democracy and cultural adherence to rule of law, but otherwise efforts to introduce democracy inhibit stability.

⁷⁸ David Mendeloff, "Truth-Seeking, Truth-Telling, and Postconflict Peacebuilding: Curb the Enthusiasm?" *International Studies Review* Volume 6, Number 3 (September 2004): 370-373. Mendeloff notes the adverse effects of manipulating identity in conflict societies, as well as observing that democracy is an unwise path to enduring peace without sufficient social institutions and a tradition of democracy. See also, Nordlinger, *Conflict Regulation in Divided Societies*, 40-41, 33-39.

⁷⁹ See Kathleen M. Jennings, "The Struggle to Satisfy: DDR Through the Eyes of Ex-combatants in Liberia," *International Peacekeeping* Volume 14, Number 2 (April 2007): 204-218.

The political nature of DDR cannot be overemphasized. DDR is a social contract that must be managed through an inclusive political process.⁸⁰ Conflict group leaders should participate in drafting and implementing a specialized DDR agreement. A ceasefire agreement alone is insufficient to guide DDR because cease-fire agreements rarely address the political and social aspects of conflict termination.⁸¹ An effective DDR agreement should focus on the terms and mechanisms for transitioning former fighters back into civil society. Transition programs should address the specific needs of war widows, orphans, the disabled, and able bodied former fighters.

The framework of reintegration assistance should include demobilization severance payments and reintegration payments differentiated by category of combatant, e.g., statutory security forces and militia. Financial assistance should broadly correspond to median household income but not so generous that they provide disincentive to paid employment. Decreasing installment payments over time are more effective than lump sum payments. Cash payments can be supplemented with in-kind assistance, e.g. food, medical care, education and job training assistance or vouchers for construction materials, food, tools, housing and other services. A non-corruptible identification system, possibly using biometric data, is useful in minimizing corruption in the transition assistance system.⁸² These reintegration assistance

⁸⁰ Disarmament is concerned with controlling the implements of violence by collecting and controlling arms and ammunition. Demobilization is downsizing the armed elements through an orderly discharge and transition to civilian life. It is enabled by financial and other forms of transition assistance. Reintegration is a social, economic, and political process of transition from a war society to a civil society, an inherently political process. See Gwinyayi A. Dzinesa, "Postconflict Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration of Former Combatants in South Africa," *International Studies Perspectives* Volume 8, (2007): 74-77.

⁸¹ The Dayton peace agreement to terminate conflict in the former Yugoslav Republics may be a partial exception to this rule. Dayton provided significant detail on disarmament and demobilization as well as generalized guidance on the treatment of former combatants. With respect to DDR, the Dayton Accord was better than most peace agreements. It likely did not address broader reintegration issues because the combatants became nation-states governed by their own laws.

⁸² Incremental financial and in-kind reintegration assistance is beneficial because it allows the local economy to absorb changes more slowly, preventing price distortions associated with cash influx. On an individual level, installment payments allow former fighters and their families sufficient time to implement their personal reintegration goals. Equally important, installments prevent the negative perception of a "combat windfall" to former fighters. These payments are classified as severance payments, consistent with Mill's framework of appropriate government action. Managing them as legitimate defense expenditures, and accounting for them accordingly, reduces the possibility of corrupting DDR programs for normative political purposes. External oversight can be helpful in this regard. See Mark Knight and Alpasla Ozerdem, "Guns, Camps and Cash:

mechanisms should also include linkages to administrative processes to settle war-damage and property rights claims. A detailed agreement on the terms of reintegration assistance, demobilization, and disarmament is essential to societal reconciliation.

Effective disarmament follows from agreed terms for reintegration. Too often, nation-building efforts have focused on disarmament without regard to the larger context of DDR.⁸³ The aim of disarmament is increasing trust and accountability among the former combatants. External intervention to verify compliance with the disarmament agreement is essential to success. Without compliance verification, each side anticipates cheating, and therefore engages in preventive hedging to assure its survival. Weapons reduction programs should be treated as proof of compliance with the political terms for reconciliation. Disarmament is a means to reconciliation, not an end in itself.⁸⁴ Supervised arms reduction programs that remove the most dangerous weapons, yet leave each party with the hedge of self-protection, can encourage strategic reciprocity and build confidence among the parties. The combination of credible external security guarantees and indigenous accountability mechanisms contribute to durable settlements and reconciliation.⁸⁵

The most critical element of the DDR process is holding egregious offenders accountable to justice. The reconciliation process must be public and appeal to all social segments. All parties to the conflict must accept some level of blame for the conflict. National or regional commissions to investigate and dispose of pardonable offenses based on an agreed framework that distinguishes between classes of pardonable and unpardonable offenses. The key element of success is broad agreement on the

Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reinsertion of Former Combatants in Transitions from War to Peace,” *Journal of Peace Research* Volume 41, Number 4 (July 2004): 510-516.

⁸³ See United Nations DDR program, http://www.unddr.org/iddrs/iddrs_guide.php [Accessed on September 20, 2009].

⁸⁴ Muggah, “No Magic Bullet,” 245.

⁸⁵ Barbara F. Walter, “The Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement,” *International Organization* Volume 51, Number 3 (Summer 1997): 335-364. Walter also notes that multi-lateral external intervention is less credible than unilateral intervention because of the unreliable commitment of multi-national (and particularly United Nations) forces to employ military power in enforcing agreements, or to stay on until new government institutions become effective.

accountability process, including appellate provisions. Reconciliation depends on holding combatants accountable for their actions in an impartial way that does not further divide society. Experience indicates that legalistic proceedings are not as compelling in reconciliation as impartial investigations led and adjudicated by respected local leaders.⁸⁶ These investigations should seek to reconcile the former combatants through a combination of amnesty for fighters not guilty of atrocity and judicial proceedings for the most egregious offenders. Amnesty serves political aims of de-criminalizing conscientious low-level former fighters, and providing them a way to re-join civil society. Former fighters receive conditional amnesty in exchange for nominal restitution, public apology through depositions, and commitments to abandon violence.⁸⁷ “War crimes” cases are best handled through specialized tribunals and should be conducted only after the reconciliation process has achieved some success with low-level fighters.⁸⁸

There are some contextual cautions and caveats for any DDR process. The first is timing. Truth telling may be of value in the long run, but taking this on too early can lead to recriminations and renewed violence. Structural stability must precede accountability efforts.⁸⁹ The second caution is that DDR programs must be sufficiently resourced. Post-conflict governments rarely have sufficient cash or credit available to fund meaningful reintegration assistance programs. External donor contributions are essential to successful DDR. Unfortunately, DDR is typically underfunded by donor nations, and the World Bank will fund DDR activities them as a matter of policy. To ensure successful DDR, financial support arrangements must be worked out early in the peace process, and be transparent to those involved in developing and implementing the DDR process.⁹⁰ The third caution is that demobilization centers

⁸⁶ James L. Gibson, “The Contributions of Truth to Reconciliation: Lessons from South Africa,” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* Volume 50, Number 3 (June 2006): 416-423.

⁸⁷ In general, limited amnesty covers a set of pardonable offenses viewed as an acceptable element of combat. Characterizing low-level fighters that did not participate in atrocities as war veterans, and providing them with some level of transition assistance may be useful. See Mendeloff and Stahn.

⁸⁸ Stahn, “Accommodating Individual Criminal Responsibility and National Reconciliation,” 953-957.

⁸⁹ Mendeloff, “Truth-Seeking, Truth-Telling, and Postconflict Peacebuilding,” 374-376.

⁹⁰ Muggah, “No Magic Bullet, 245-247.

should be in proximity to the area where former combatants will settle after they return to civil society. The purpose of these cantonments is to identify, register, and classify former combatants for transition assistance. They should provide basic health care, essential services, and transition assistance to family members as well as former fighters. Properly equipped and staffed, transition centers are the foundation of successful DDR.⁹¹ The fourth caveat is regarding disarmament. Generalized weapons buy-back programs have a negligible effect on security. They can inadvertently create a regional arms market, where old or unserviceable weapons are turned in for cash that is then used to buy upgraded weapons. Transition camps, with incorruptible identification systems, are useful in disarmament because transition assistance can be conditioned on turning in individual weapons and military equipment. This approach mitigates the arms market phenomenon by limiting combatants to a single buy-back event.⁹²

Conflict regulation and reconciliation are normative social processes with economic and political dimensions. The willingness of elite conflict group leaders to engage in combinations of Nordlinger's conflict regulating behaviors is a prerequisite for successful nation-building. It generates the political accommodation necessary for subsequent demobilization, disarmament, and reconciliation. Intervention by a committed external power can provide assurances that both parties are complying with the agreed framework. Collectively, these measures contribute to enduring settlements that can be sustained by strong political and economic institutions.

TOWARD A NATION-BUILDING OPERATING CONCEPT

Nation-building activities are likely to remain an important method to support U.S. foreign policy aims.⁹³ A U.S. nation-building intervention should be guided by an operating concept: a mid-to long-

⁹¹ Knight and Ozerdem, "Guns, Camps and Cash," 507-509.

⁹² Knight and Ozerdem, "Guns, Camps and Cash," 503-506. See also Muggah, "No Magic Bullet," 245-247.

⁹³ Recall the working definition of nation-building from section 2, "Nation-building is the efforts of an external party or parties to simultaneously modify political and economic institutions of the client nation. The political component may involve reconstruction, adaptation, or re-legitimization of existing or former political institutions consistent with indigenous values and mores. The economic component consists of combinations of reconstruction and development. In the context of nation-building, reconstruction is limited to restoring the political

term directive that outlines objectives, principles, and guidelines for achieving synergy among the operations of U.S. agencies that do not share a common corporate leadership structure or chain of command. Seven thematic attributes – persistence over time, the normative nature of nation-building, bottom-up development of representative and accountable institutions, transparency, incremental adaptation, and limited scope of government actions – are present in many nation-building interventions.

The dominant characteristic of nation-building is disequilibrium in the function of power systems. Centralized authority systems and political institutions have become ineffective in performing the functions of state. Identity groups rise to fill the governance void, and compete with the state for sovereignty. The process of managing change has become disorderly or violent. Resurrecting civil society in the aftermath of conflict depends on restoring confidence in political and economic institutions, or re-creating them based on a new political order. Establishing self-sustaining, effective institutions in conflict-prone societies requires years, not months, and will likely span several U.S. political administrations. Persistent, coherent U.S. assistance to the target nation is essential to a successful outcome and by extension to U.S. prestige and effectiveness in its leadership role among free nations.⁹⁴

Nation-building is context-specific and highly normative. The act of intervention requires the United States to make choices about winners and losers in the competition for sovereignty. These choices cannot be avoided, and are best made early in the intervention. Despite the appeal of electoral democracy, it is not conducive to stability in divided societies. Elections should be deferred until indigenous institutions are strong enough to constructively manage them.⁹⁵

and economic institutions to ante bellum conditions, while development implies some degree of social and economic growth intended to transform the society into something other than what historically existed.”

⁹⁴ Not all cases of U.S. military intervention meet the threshold of nation-building. Short-term humanitarian assistance missions and punitive strikes are but two examples. However, instances of unilateral U.S. intervention to change or stabilize a regime should be considered a potential nation-building case and guided by a long-term operating concept.

⁹⁵ George Ross, Theda Skocopol, Tony Smith, and Judith Eisenberg Vichniac, “Barrington Moore’s Social Origins and Beyond: Historical Social Analysis since the 1960s,” in *Democracy, Revolution, and History*, ed. Theda Skocopol (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 16.

This does not imply that the U.S. should arbitrarily select government officials or decree the form of government. These decisions depend on a transparent and incremental, bottom-up approach that involved local leaders in rebuilding indigenous institutions. The process restoring formal government authority begins at the village or parish level and proceeds incrementally toward aggregated power at the national level. When effective local governance is established, local leaders can then be empowered to establish limited national governance. Interim national government should be limited to three major functions: foreign policy and territorial protection, providing a legal framework for property rights and economic transitions, including courts and police to enforce those laws, and control the monetary system to sustain public and private transactions. The interim government mechanisms should include provisions for proportional representation in the central government, and mutual veto provisions that serve to focus political action on common goals and strengthen cooperation among identity groups. Once political and economic institutions are sufficiently stable, national referendum can be used to form a permanent constitutional government.⁹⁶ Employing an incremental approach acknowledges that there are practical limits to the amount of change that a society can absorb without increasing instability.

Indigenous security forces are an inherently political institution. They exist to preserve the state and enforce the social contract. Security operations in nation-building should focus on professionalizing security forces through training, mentoring, and combined operations. Security forces, like governance institutions, should be created using a bottom-up approach that includes a plan to incrementally integrate them into national security forces. This imposes two unique security-related tasks on the U.S. military. Foremost, ensuring that security forces remain loyal to the governance institution rather than any particular government official. Second, and more daunting, is that U.S. military forces must provide or bolster capacity to defend the state against external aggression or meddling, while at the same time mitigating competition among security forces for influence at the national level.

⁹⁶ An incremental approach allows the U.S. to defer decisions controversial issues about voter eligibility and electoral procedures until political institutions are capable of managing social mobilization at the national level.

NSC-68 provides a useful framework for structuring an operating concept in terms of context, outcomes, resources, logic and adaptation, courses of action, capabilities, and risk. The following is an effort to summarize the major elements of a nation-building operating concept according to the NSC-68 framework. The practitioner is once again cautioned that context specific normative considerations are essential to successful nation-building. The proposed framework of an operating concept is not one-size-fits-all; it serves only as a guide for informing development of a specific operating concept for a particular nation-building endeavor.

From the outset, a nation-building operating concept needs to describe the context from the perspective of the United States and from that of the target state. From the perspective of the United States, does an existential threat to the target country matter enough to engage in protracted political and military engagement?⁹⁷ From the perspective of the target state, is the instability likely to result in widespread violent unrest or atrocity? If these conditions are met, then the remainder of contextual analysis is straightforward according to Nordlinger's taxonomy. The operating concept should identify the structural sources of dysfunction, such as the distribution and use of human, economic, and physical capital.⁹⁸ From this, the political structure can be characterized as either a weak state or an independent state. Conflict groups can be classified according to geographic locality, religion, ethnicity, economic strata, patronage or trade association, political party, education level, and other relevant variables. The cleavages and overlaps of conflict groups point toward the sources of disequilibrium and potential mitigation.

⁹⁷ U.S. commitment to definitive action is a critical requirement of successful nation-building. If one or more U.S. federal agencies object to the enterprise, it should not proceed until consensus is achieved. In addition to Executive Branch consensus, Congressional endorsement is a necessary condition for sustained financial and political viability of any specific nation-building operation. A sustained nation-building enterprise benefits from extensive Executive and Legislative branch strategic communication efforts to sustain popular acquiescence or support.

⁹⁸ Four categories for understanding domestic context are propensities of the state; structure, function, and distribution of political institutions; sources, methods, and motives of voluntary social association and mobilization, and distribution of economic resources.

The practitioner should avoid attractive, but immeasurable, psychological explanations for conflict. Detailed differential analysis of key political and economic institution variables – or exquisitely selected proxies – is a reliable way to understand the true context and meaning of the conflict. Differential analysis must be done at community level and carefully aggregated to avoid masking important regional variances. Structured assessment of net changes in income levels, distribution of political power, access to essential services (food, water, fuel, medical care), arrest rates, violent crime, provide relevant insights into current conditions and help define outcomes in terms of time, space, and purpose.

Intervention can be a catalyst for positive change if it is predicated on a set of unambiguous and achievable outcomes.⁹⁹ Examples of measureable outcomes include rationalizing distributions of power among a limited set of viable political parties, establishing a limited but representative government, expanding both electoral and constructive non-electoral political mobilization, rationalizing the citizen's obligations to and claims against the state, and regulating unrest through accountability and security measures.¹⁰⁰ Integrating metrics into outcome descriptions serves two important functions. First, it prevents vague but appealing rhetoric from eclipsing reason in the policy process. Second, it facilitates the self-synchronization of actions by semi-autonomous agencies by describing what “good enough” looks like. This enables all participating agencies to assess and modify the resources applied to achieve the outcomes over time.

Resources are the tangible measure of commitment. The U.S. and the target state must demonstrate commitment to the nation-building effort by committing proportional resources to stimulate indigenous growth. Even the most fragmented and devastated target state has some level of an economy.

⁹⁹ O'Donnell and Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*, 7-8. See also Skocopol, et al, *Democracy, Revolution, and History*, 69.

¹⁰⁰ Of these, limiting the scope of government and limiting the number of political parties are most influential. The former discourages corruption of both the economy through poorly executed government fiscal and monetary policies, as well as discourages corruption of government officials by limiting their influence in economic sectors. Limiting the number of political parties has a significant moderating effect on the political agenda and counterproductive elite logrolling behavior.

It has human, political, and physical capital that can be redistributed or leveraged to expand the range or quantity of outputs available. Donor manpower, expertise, and funding are used to proportionally complement indigenous resources. Proportional investment prevents unhelpful distinction between foreign and indigenous development activities, making it possible to use development to strengthen local management skills through jointly administered programs.¹⁰¹ It also increases fungibility across asset classes and capital sources. This generally increases flexibility in responding to emergent opportunities. Proportional investment also contributes to accountability for return on investment. In exchange for U.S. security, economic, or political assistance, the target nation must agree to make progress toward political and economic restructuring goals.

Private donor capital should be directed primarily toward physical infrastructure development, such as ground transportation and labor-intensive industrial processes.¹⁰² These types of projects spur economic growth by improving transaction efficiency. They also promote stability by raising the income potential of poorer citizens over time. Because private donor capital is generally unavailable for DDR transition assistance programs, a significant portion of government-to-government aid should be reserved for demobilization and reintegration of former combatants. Finally, the economic component of a nation-building operating concept must assess the absorptive capacity of the target nation. There are limits to the amount of resources that can be introduced without distorting the economic and political power structures.¹⁰³ Too much assistance can be as harmful and destabilizing as too little. Proportional

¹⁰¹ This approach to resource assistance is analogous to a franchise agreement or venture capital investment. The United States provides capital and expertise to indigenous group predicated on agreed performance parameters. As with venture capital or a franchise, the target nation provides a portion of the baseline capital in the form of partial funding or in-kind labor and materials. This target nation investment capital is supplemented proportional external donor funding. It results in a mutually beneficial enterprise that shares risk, and a stark contrast to the traditional transitional administration approach that provides for the preponderance of the needs of the target nation.

¹⁰² Donor capital should not be confused with foreign direct investment (FDI). It is unclear what effects FDI have on nation-building efforts, but it is an unreliable source of capital infusion in early stages because of uncertainty about legal mechanisms to protect foreign investment.

¹⁰³ Lewis and Kallab, *Development Strategies Reconsidered*, 130-132

development programs should strive to increase resource fungibility, and allocate resources in areas that can absorb them efficiently.

The heart of a nation-building operating concept is the logic of adaptation underlying the courses of action. Understanding the context and motives of the principal actors in both the system of support and system of opposition provides the logic guiding courses of action. A coherent logic of adaptation is generated from an indigenous point of view. Imposing a U.S. point of view may conceal the true reasons for institutional imbalance and dysfunction.¹⁰⁴ A systemic view of the conflict provides insights into the motives and objectives of conflict group leaders. These factors help to create comprehensive, long-term courses of action to restore confidence in indigenous governance institutions. The course of action (COA) in a nation-building operating concept provides the framework for long-term self-synchronizing interagency activities. The COA is a generalized approach based on systemic understanding of complex, long-established inherited indigenous practices and values. Forces of change are best generated and employed at the local level, not through a homogeneous top-down approach.¹⁰⁵

Comprehensive COAs address developmental requirements of political and economic institutions. The broad objectives include self-sustaining economic growth and non-disruptive political liberalization. While political and economic development cannot be entirely separated in practice, a nation-building operating concept should emphasize restructuring the economic sector as a means of facilitating sustainable political reform. Economic assistance programs are a collaborative enterprise of shared risk between the target nation and donors, focused on reducing inequity in capital ownership, particularly

¹⁰⁴ Samuel Huntington succinctly points out the folly of projecting U.S. values and logic on nation building: The American experience and style of government and development is not likely to be repeated, or exported. Abundant natural resources, general political homogeneity, a government limited by design and founded on the principle that all men are created equal, contributed to a general lack of political disorder since founding that starkly separates the American experience from much of the rest of the world. American self-determination is the natural outcome of general social equality as a principle of rule. Because these conditions – and that American-style self-determination is an outcome of general social equality and mobility as a principle of governance – are not frequently encountered in the rest of the world, American efforts toward nation-building have been misguided and ineffective. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, 5-7.

¹⁰⁵ George Ross, Theda Skocopol, Tony Smith, and Judith Eisenberg Vichniac, “Barrington Moore’s *Social Origins* and Beyond: Historical Social Analysis since the 1960s”, in *Democracy, Revolution, and History* (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1998), 17.

human capital.¹⁰⁶ Improving labor-intensive industry and agriculture, as well as distribution infrastructure and food preservation capacity are useful first steps during nation building. Replacing non-competitive state owned enterprises with private cooperatives is another beneficial use of donor technical assistance, in-kind aid, and financing. These provide sustainable foundations of economic development. Macro financial assistance is a significant undertaking that depends on effective political institutions that are capable of fundamental financial planning, budgeting, and project execution. An integrated financial assistance package includes technical management and training expertise to develop indigenous capacity, as well as capital influx to fund the most urgent development priorities. Part of the technical financial assistance program must include advice and assistance on developing sustainable local and national tax policies and enforcement mechanisms necessary for sustainable government policies. Financial assistance in early stages of nation-building benefits from donor funding rather than international debt financing. Nascent indigenous institutions lack the technical capacity to manage balance of payment and debt service obligations while maintaining stable currency exchange rates.¹⁰⁷ Similarly, international administration that goes beyond basic functions of public order, internal security, and the most essential elements of humanitarian assistance can be harmful to development of self-sustaining indigenous institutions.¹⁰⁸

As noted earlier, early introduction of electoral democracy can be counterproductive and highly destabilizing. The merits of limiting government scope of power, limiting the number of political parties, and the folly of premature introduction of nation-wide democracy have been addressed. Non-electoral selection of representatives to serve in interim government functions has several benefits. Foremost, it

¹⁰⁶ It is common to find schools and basic education as components of nation-building programs. Basic education and literacy are certainly useful and key obligations of citizenship, but they are not a top priority in nation building. Practical education such as apprenticeship for capital intensive industries or modernizing agriculture can be more productive initial education efforts; technical schools should receive a high priority for any education funding.

¹⁰⁷ Lewis and Kallab, *Development Strategies Reconsidered*, 9-23. Caplan, *International Governance of War-Torn Territories*, 136-151.

¹⁰⁸ Caplan, *International Governance of War-Torn Territories*, 44-55 and 86-93.

avoids the unrest and winner-take-all dynamics that can attend premature national elections. Non-electoral selection of representatives is doubtless normative; the U.S. intervention must make exquisite choices in how to facilitate representation without elections. Distasteful as non-electoral representation may be to some, it avoids more difficult normative issues such as voter eligibility, political boundaries, legal framework for elections, and run-off rules that an external party is poorly equipped to decide. Once representation and interim arrangements for power sharing are established, the effort should turn to creating interim law primarily focused on property rights, restitution, and reintegration of former combatants. Creating a code to govern these issues serves to foster political integration and conflict regulation. In turn, it promotes economic development by establishing orderly systems to transfer capital ownership. Property rights are the most important aspect of sustainable economic development and political liberalization.

Despite mixed results in maintaining public order, security is a traditional centerpiece of international nation-building intervention.¹⁰⁹ An effective nation-building operating concept should again place most of the security effort on developing indigenous security institutions at the local and national levels. Initial efforts in training indigenous security forces should build their capacity to deter, coerce, and compel spoilers and criminals. Vetting these security forces according to indigenous standards contributes to their legitimacy. Security forces must be empowered with fundamental authority to dispense justice for common crimes through a tribunal system where punishments are limited to short incarcerations or nominal fines. More serious crimes or crimes of a political nature are referred to formal judicial proceedings. The United States or other intervening partners must guarantee security against international threats. This bifurcated approach simultaneously builds indigenous capacity for domestic order, subject to U.S. or international oversight, and prevents ambitious neighbors from exploiting fragile political and economic conditions in the target nation.

¹⁰⁹ Caplan, *International Governance of War-Torn Territories*, 45-56.

In addition to the elements focused on the target nation, a U.S. nation-building operating concept must articulate principles for developing and employing U.S. capabilities, and describe acceptable risk. In this sense, capabilities are driven by specific nation-building objectives and tasks. Capabilities are the agency components that can be directly employed to execute nation-building tasks. The size and organization of those deployable capabilities will change over time. This requires U.S. domestic political, legislative, and financial support for the nation-building enterprise, as well as some level of international endorsement.¹¹⁰ Capabilities also include the legal and moral authority to make normative choices on behalf of – and ideally in concert with – the target nation.

Risk at the operating concept level is less concerned with the consequences of situational or tactical action. Risk is described in terms of the existential threat, i.e., what is the probability that our assessment is fundamentally in error. Risk articulation informs decisions about resource allocation and scope of action limitations needed to mitigate fundamental errors in assessment or execution. Risk articulation should also help identify areas in which explicit interagency coordination is needed to complement the self-synchronization provided by prescriptive operating principles.¹¹¹

The foregoing description of a nation-building operating concept emphasizes the criticality of seven thematic attributes of nation-building. It recognizes that U.S. intervention is highly context-specific, highly normative, and should not be undertaken without the presence of an existential threat to a target nation that affects a vital U.S. interest. A specific operating concept can improve efficiency of U.S. action through self-synchronization of agency action according to enduring operating principles endorsed by senior government officials. An effective nation-building operating concept is developed from concrete, quantifiable assessments of the target nation. It recognizes that military intervention alone is

¹¹⁰ At minimum, U.S. Congressional appropriations for nation-building provide some capabilities, though particular legislative authorization may be required for certain classes of activities. International endorsement can be informal and does not imply that United Nations authorization is required in any way. In some cases, regional dynamics may prevent any form of United Nations deliberation on the matter.

¹¹¹ Ad hoc interagency or “whole-of-government” coordination boards are counterproductive in most situations. This additional bureaucracy rarely improves coordination among U.S. agencies. It should be avoided wherever possible. For precisely this reason, an agreed operating concept is preferred to ad hoc arrangements.

insufficient, but non-military intervention alone is likely to achieve little.¹¹² Nation-building is a mid-to-long term undertaking; a partnership to restore confidence in indigenous institutions and to set and sustain the trajectory for self-sustaining growth and equity. Preparing an appropriate operating concept is a critical first step to success.

¹¹² Walter, "The Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement," 362-363.

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